



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

AKPIRG works to ensure the rights of people who are often sidelined, and to create healthy and thriving communities. Our work is done with the understanding that corporations should not have undue influence in our government, especially as corporations are recent constructs and many different types of government have existed on this land for tens of thousands of years. Alaska is an Indigenous place, comprised of 227 federally recognized Tribes, and our work takes place on unceded sovereign land. This fact informs our work and our lives. AKPIRG staff and board live on and are stewards of Sugpiaq, Dena'ina, Auk Kwáan, Taku Kwáan, Lower Tanana Dene, Gwichyaa Zhee Gwich'in, Denaakk'e, and Tiwa lands.

A LETTER FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

The only constant in AKPIRG's work in 2021 has been change. Because our work is directly responsive to the communities we serve, our work on specific projects and issues is always flexible. This flexibility, while a lot of work, allows us to choose issues that matter the most to our members and to build and deepen our relationships with partner organizations.

Heading into 2021, there were some things we knew: the Census had ended, and the redistricting cycle began. AKPIRG helped build, lead, and fiscally sponsor an incredible coalition of community leaders, non-profit and labor organizations and Alaska Native Corporations to fight for more equitable maps. We knew that COVID-19 still posed an incredible threat to Alaskans, and we worked to address that threat through the lenses of public health, language access, financial efficacy and political transparency. And we knew that we were tasked with an incredible opportunity to work with industry leaders and ratepayer advocates to find a democratic path towards lower rates and diversified energy generation for Alaskans.

The rest was all a surprise. From the attempted overthrow of our federal government, to billions of dollars in federal relief funds, to ethics issues at the highest level of our state government, to internet subsidy programs—AKPIRG staff have worked passionately to seize these opportunities and simultaneously hold bad actors to account. This is the heart of our mission—to hold decision-makers accountable to the public while envisioning a better future.

It has been a true honor to see AKPIRG grow in our work since I joined the board more than a decade ago. Back then, we had one staff member. Now, we have over 20 staff, for whom we can provide health and other benefits. As my three, three year terms are coming to an end, I will be handing over the reins of Board Chair of AKPIRG. I am thrilled to announce that Lois Epstein will

be AKPIRG's new Board Chair. I'll be staying involved, on AKPIRG's Policy Committee and as a volunteer.

To you, reader—thank you for your commitment and partnership with AKPIRG—I hope you will stay involved and help us all create a more just, thriving world.



Nelta Edwards

WHO WE ARE

Our Mission

Created in 1974, AKPIRG is a non-profit, non-partisan, citizen-oriented statewide membership organization, researching, educating and advocating on behalf of the public interest. AKPIRG advances the public interest by providing individuals with the opportunity and the information to participate equally in and be treated equally by our economic, social and political systems.

Core Values

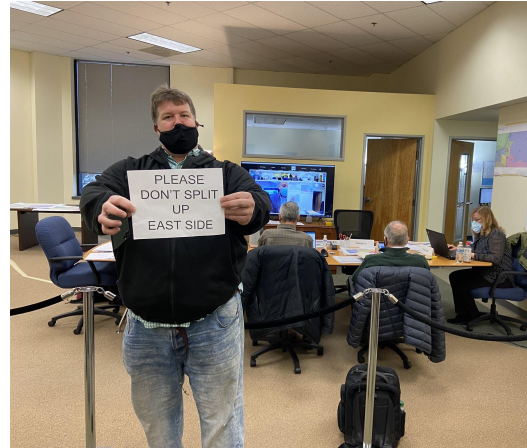
- Justice
- Community
- Accountability

Our Vision

We are working towards a world of self-determined, thriving communities governed by people, not corporations.



AKPIRG Executive Director Veri Di Suvero and Energy Analyst Alyssa Sappenfield tabling at Salmonfest.



A resident of East Anchorage protests the Alaska Redistricting Board.

AKPIRG BY THE NUMBERS



101 Records Requests



35 Events & Webinars



32 Earned Media Spots



742 Public Comments



11 New Staff Hired



4 Lawsuits, Amicus Briefs,
& Ethics Complaints Filed



20 Total Staff & Contractors



24 Grants Awarded



120 New Donors



12 Op-Eds Published



10 Coalition Memberships



\$336,000 Funds Raised for
Collaborative Efforts

AKPIRG UPDATES

Board Activity

AKPIRG's board of directors kept busy in 2021! The board welcomed two new board members, Ron Meehan and Miguel Rohrbacher. Both Ron and Miguel bring with them perspectives and expertise that will serve AKPIRG well. The board also held a "Spring Cleaning" fundraiser which encouraged donors to help "clean up corruption" with their donations and the incentive of an AKPIRG branded sponge. The fundraiser was conceptualized and executed by the board with board members Nelta Edwards and Clay Venetis serving as fundraising co-chairs.

Staff Activity

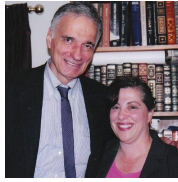
Our staff grew significantly this year. We added six new full time employees and retained over 30 contractors and language panelists to help us with our work. And we wrapped up our final season with The Tax Associates, as Anita Greve is retiring. Thank you to Mary and Anita for your help over the years!



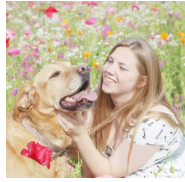
AKPIRG STAFF



Alyssa
Sappenfield
*Energy Analyst,
shared staff with
Fairbanks Climate
Action Coalition*



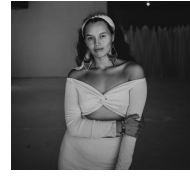
Andrée
McLeod
*Good
Government
Director*



Ashlyn
Johnson
*Broadband
Research Analyst*



Ben Boettger
*Energy Outreach
Specialist*



Brittany
Woods-Orrison
*Broadband
Specialist, shared
staff with Native
Movement*



Erin
Willahan
*Language
Access
Coordinator*



Robin
O'Donoghue
*Communications
Manager*



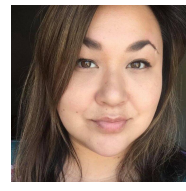
Annauk Olin
*Indigenous
Language
Translation
Consultant*



Bridget
Shaughnessy
Smith
*Government
Accountability
Fellow*



Phil Wight
Policy Analyst



Rochelle
Adams
*Indigenous
Engagement
Director with
Native Peoples
Action*



Veri di
Suvero
*Executive
Director*



Tanya Iskra
*Government
Spending Analyst*



Camilla
Hussein-Scott
*Operations
Manager*



David
Dunsmore
AFFR GIS Mapper



Kelsey
Schober
*Grants
Manager**



Scott Maxwell
*Consumer
Advocacy
Coordinator**

**Left AKPIRG in 2021*

Program Highlights

Healthy Communities

When COVID-19 hit Alaska in 2020, all of our issues were amplified. In 2021, many of the same issues (predatory lending, garnishing stimulus checks, utility shut offs, residential evictions and the state's crashing economy, etc.) remained while new issues compounded on top of them. AKPIRG worked to respond to the way constantly changing health mandates, new variants, and continuing COVID-19 impacts affected the people of Alaska. This included leading efforts to educate Alaskans on eviction moratoriums and supporting grassroots organizations responding to crisis situations caused by COVID-19, such as the Mutual Aid Network of Anchorage.

Additionally, building on our work in 2020, AKPIRG staff worked in partnership with Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC), Native Peoples Action Community Fund (NPACF), and the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services to create culturally relevant messages about COVID-19 vaccines in eight Alaska Native languages.



*"I got my Covid shot so I wouldn't get sick."
(Gwichyaa Zhee Gwich'in)*



"I want us to be among each other, that is why I got the shot. I love the people I am with." (Tlingit)

MOVEMENT BUILDING

The work we do is not done in a vacuum. Our supporters are part of a larger movement: building towards a better, healthier world. This includes a world without toxics poisoning our communities, Indigenous communities self-determining their resource management, and explicit anti-racist practices ensuring equitably healthy and safe communities. Just as we rely on partners to support the work we do, we recognize that our participation in their work is critical to ensuring solidarity, trust, and progress. For this reason, we are a member of the Alaska Just Transition Community (JTC). The JTC inspires collaboration and builds collective strategies that both address challenges and build pathways out of a declining oil economy.

Just Transition is a framework for a fair shift to an economy that is ecologically sustainable, equitable and just for all Alaskans. After centuries of global plunder, the profit-driven, growth-dependent, industrial economy is severely undermining the life support systems of the planet. The current economy based on extracting from a finite system faster than the capacity of the system to regenerate will eventually come to an end—either through collapse or through our intentional re-organization.

AKPIRG worked with organizations like the Alaska Poor People's Campaign, Native Movement, The Alaska Center and Native Peoples Action to host a series of “Fireside Chat” live streams. This series covered topics such as the THRIVE act, labor issues, economic transitions, etc. and provided a space for community members to connect virtually and share ideas.

Additionally, AKPIRG helped support the formation of the Coalition for Justice, a coalition of nonprofits, advocacy groups and other community organizations working together to achieve an Alaska with an equitable and fair legal system.

Activities included:

- Hosting “Fireside Chat” web series with partner organizations.
- Supporting the formation of the Coalition for Justice.
- Supporting the Just Transition Community's advocacy efforts.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & GOOD GOVERNANCE

Every 10 years, following the U.S. Census, the Alaska Redistricting Board is tasked with redrawing the state's legislative boundaries in accordance with population changes. This year AKPIRG was heavily involved in the redistricting process and stewarded the Alaskans

For Fair Redistricting (AFFR) coalition. AFFR, a non-partisan coalition of Alaska Native corporations, organized labor, nonprofits, and other community organizations worked together to create a complete redistricting map and organize grassroots engagement with the Alaska Redistricting Board.

To facilitate this process, AKPIRG hired two staff to work for the AFFR coalition. Robin O'Donoghue was hired as the coalition coordinator, and David Dunsmore was hired for the technical data and mapping aspects of the project. AKPIRG fundraised and were able to send AFFR staff to attend all of the Redistricting Board's meetings across the state, allowing the coalition to stay as informed and up-to-date as possible. Having staff at all board meetings turned out to be particularly important in the aftermath of the redistricting process, as AKPIRG has now joined in support of a lawsuit seeking to overturn racial and political gerrymandering that exists in the final plan adopted by the board.

Another integral part of AKPIRG's civic engagement work this year was working in conjunction with the Alaska Civic Engagement State Table (AKCES) on policy research and education surrounding anti-democracy and voter suppression legislation. AKPIRG worked with AKCES to form a 501(c)3 State Voter Table, where organizations could collaborate to work on efforts relating to voting access and protecting democracy.

Activities included:

- Creating and submitting a redistricting plan to the Alaska Redistricting Board.
- Organizing unprecedented grassroots engagement in the redistricting public comment process.
- Backing a lawsuit against the Alaska Redistricting Board to un-gerrymander East Anchorage, Muldoon and Eagle River.
- Submitting an Executive Branch Ethics Act complaint about corrupt revolving door employment practices at the highest levels of State government.
- Assisting with the formation of AKCES (Alaska Civic Engagement State Table).



AKPIRG Communications Manager Robin O'Donoghue testifying before the Alaska Redistricting Board.



AFFR GIS Mapper David Dunsmore observes members of the Alaska Redistricting Board answer questions in Haines, AK.

REGULATORY TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

In 2020 the State of Alaska approved the sale of BP's Alaska assets including BP's share of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline to Texas based oil company, Hilcorp, LLC. The deal marked Alaska's largest sale in a generation and was approved by state regulatory agencies without ever requiring Hilcorp to release financial records to the public. This deal effectively gave a private company with a poor environmental track record a monopoly over Alaska's oil and gas resources and infrastructure, including Cook Inlet Natural Gas, the Trans-Alaska Pipeline and Prudhoe Bay. AKPIRG was a powerful voice urging for public scrutiny in this deal, raising awareness and organizing grassroots efforts to engage in the public comment process.

This year we refocused our efforts into supporting the legal efforts of the City of Valdez - filed complaints with the Regulatory Commission of Alaska over the many issues with the BP-Hilcorp sale. Over the course of the last year, AKPIRG's Energy Analyst Alyssa Sappenfield worked to compile and file multiple amicus briefs in conjunction with The City of Valdez as the city's complaints move through the various legal stages.

The process is still ongoing, and we remain committed to fighting for transparency from Alaska's largest corporations.

Activities included:

- Filing two separate amicus briefs supporting litigation opposing the BP-Hilcorp sale and procedural issues with the Regulatory Commission of Alaska.

- Publishing multiple op-eds to raise awareness on transparency and accountability issues regarding the sale and the Regulatory Commission of Alaska.
- Holding state agencies, including the RCA and AIDEA accountable to untransparent practices, especially focused on the misuse of executive session.
- Supporting legislation for a state on-line checkbook, that would provide accountability in the State's expenditures and accounting practices
- Hiring a Government Spending Analyst to track the appropriation and spending of federal infrastructure funds.

RATEPAYER ADVOCACY

In 2020, AKPIRG Executive Director Veri di Suvero was appointed as the Consumer Advocacy representative to the Railbelt Reliability Council's (RRC) Implementation Committee. Since assuming the position on the RRC, AKPIRG has been working on utility issues at a systems level to lower rates and allow for more diverse sources of generation. In addition to having representation on the RRC, AKPIRG has been engaged with partner organizations to democratize utility boards by engaging and educating consumers on the ways in which they can influence their utility co-op boards to be consumer focused.

Leading many of these efforts has been AKPIRG's Energy Outreach Specialist, Ben Boettger, who has endeavored over the last year to disseminate information to the public on policy decisions and current issues before Alaska's energy agencies. AKPIRG's efforts have included creating a Transparency Scorecard to rate how open co-ops are for member participation and helping support the Alaska Energy Transparency Project, an editorially independent news site that covers energy as an opportunity for civic and democratic engagement.

Activities included:

- Coordinated with utility cooperatives, entrepreneurs, and government agencies to form an organization to lower utility rates and diversify energy sources.
- Supported the Alaska Energy Transparency Project, an editorially independent publication dedicated to covering electric co-ops.
- Created Transparency Scorecards for Railbelt electric co-ops.
- Published op-eds analyzing how trends in Alaska's energy economy will affect consumers.

BROADBAND ADVOCACY

In 2021, AKPIRG focused heavily on issues related to broadband internet access. This past fall, AKPIRG brought on Broadband Specialist Brittany Woods-Orrison, a shared position in partnership with Native Movement. AKPIRG and Native Movement also collaborated on other broadband projects facilitated by AKPIRG's Broadband Research Analyst, Ashlyn Johnson, to distribute information to the public about resources available to consumers such as the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) program — a temporary COVID relief project that gives monthly broadband discounts of \$50-\$75 for qualified households.

Activities included:

- Presenting on broadband issues at the People's AFN virtual conference.
- Developing graphics and distributing information on the FCC's Emergency Broadband Benefit.
- Submitting a letter to the FCC on improvements needed with the Emergency Broadband Benefit program.

CONSUMER FINANCE

In 2021, AKPIRG hired Scott Maxwell as our Consumer Advocacy Coordinator. In this position, Scott hosted debt collection training sessions for some of our organizational partners as well as the public in order to provide good information about consumers' rights when debt collectors call. AKPIRG also hosted our first "Train-the-Trainers: Know Your Rights" cohort, to teach about debt collection and cancellations.

Additionally, AKPIRG worked at the federal level, urging the Senate to close a financial loophole that would have allowed lenders to get out of Alaska's lending regulations. That was a huge victory, and that loophole (named rent-a-bank) was closed. Also at the federal level, AKPIRG participated in the national advocacy actions to stop payday lenders' high interest rates, which in Alaska are 521% for a \$100, 14-day loan.

Activities included:

- Hosting Train-the-Trainers event to train partner organizations on debt collection.
- Leading advocacy efforts to pressure lawmakers to close financial regulation loopholes.
- Chairing the Alaska Financial Partnership Network.
- Providing televised interviews to raise public awareness about different types of scams.



AKPIRG Executive Director Veri Di Suervo appears on Alaska's News Source to warn consumers about scams.

CONSUMER SAFETY

Corporations are not required to disclose or test for certain toxins in their products. In the past, to hold them to account and ensure healthier communities, AKPIRG has assisted with data collection for nation-wide studies which have prompted several large corporations including Lowes, Amazon, and Taco Bell to pledge elimination of PFAS in their products. This year, AKPIRG remained involved in advocating against the use of PFAS by working with other organizations to raise awareness on the issue, which impacts and threatens the health of us all.

Other Activities included:

- Signing onto a letter with over 100 other organizations requesting REI to ban the use of PFAS.
- Supporting the passage of a bill in Alaska that would ban PFAS.
- Advocating on the national level, as well as local Alaska television, for safer infant sleep products.

LOOKING FORWARD

Over the last year, AKPIRG learned how to adapt and grow as an organization while under stressful conditions. We've grown our team to be larger than it has ever been before, which means we are poised to take on more work this upcoming year. With a draught of competent leadership in Alaska and an influx of billions of dollars in federal funding into the state, the stakes for our work have never been more evident. In the New Year, we will rely on our values and accountability to our members to guide us, and the adaptability we've grown accustomed to will meet any challenges thrown our way.

- **IN THE OFFICE:** In 2021 we brought on more staff than we have ever had before up to full-time so they can affordably access healthcare. In 2022 we hope to secure a larger office to allow more employees the option of working in-person, vs. remote.
- **WITH OUR PARTNERS:** In 2021 we hired a new shared position between AKPIRG and Native Movement, allowing collaboration on redistricting with a statewide broad-based coalition, and we partnered with organizations on numerous individual projects. Looking ahead to 2022, we plan on continuing to work with coalitions such as the Alaska Civic Engagement State Table, the Alaska Coalition for Justice, the Alaska Just Transition Collective and more!
- **ON THE ISSUES:** In 2022 we will continue working to make all COVID-19 vaccine and booster information accessible to all Alaskans. We also will keep working to support the legal efforts opposing the BP-Hilcorp sale as well as the gerrymandered maps approved by the Alaska Redistricting Board. We will continue working on issues that the pandemic has demonstrated are the most pressing barriers impacting consumers such as broadband access and advocating for proper allocation of funds from federal infrastructure legislation. As always we will strive to shine a light on corruption, and hold corporations and government agencies accountable where power is abused and the trust of the public is breached.

ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERS

Memberships & Coalitions

Railbelt Reliability Council, Implementation Committee – Consumer Advocacy Representative

Alaska Just Transition Community - Member

Alaska Financial Partnership Network – Chair

Alaska Civic Engagement State Table (AKCES) - Steering Committee

Alaska Coalition for Justice - Member

Alaska Railbelt Energy Coalition (AREC) – Coordinator

Alaskan Artists for a Just Transition – Arts in Action event planning member

Alaskans for Fair Redistricting - Coordinator

Justice For All - Alaska Courts System Legal Navigator – Steering committee member

Save Our State - Member

Renewable Energy Alaska Project (REAP) - Member

Consumer Federation of America - Organization Member & Board Member

Foraker Group - Member

National Community Reinvestment Coalition - Member

Organizational Partners

We couldn't do the work we do without incredible support from our partners. Below is an incomplete snapshot of our partners. These organizations are doing amazing work.

- Alaska Center
- Alaska Community Action on Toxics
- Native Movement
- Alaska AFL-CIO
- Anchorage Community Land Trust
- Native Peoples Action
- Money Management International
- Alaska Poor People's Campaign
- Cook Inlet Housing Authority
- Foraker Group
- Alaska Legal Services Corporation
- Alaska Courts System
- Renewable Energy Alaska Project
- Cook Inletkeeper
- Susitna River Coalition
- NAACP, Anchorage Chapter
- Alaska Black Caucus
- ACLU of Alaska
- Planned Parenthood Votes
- Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
- YWCA of Alaska
- Refugee Assistance and Immigrant Services (RAIS)
- Doyon Foundation
- Alaska Literacy Program
- Alaska Children's Trust
- ANTHC
- DHSS
- Stand up AK
- NANA
- Out North

THANK YOU

We're continuing to work around the clock to support Alaskans and our community members (that's you!). This past year has been challenging, but it has prepared us to take on even more going forward. From the AKPIRG staff and board, we are so extraordinarily grateful for your commitment to accountability and transparency in difficult times.

Our Funding

Our work is made possible by community support as well as grant funding. This past year, AKPIRG was awarded a variety of grants from philanthropic partners. Thanks to this funding, AKPIRG was able to ramp up our work in Language Access, Redistricting, Ratepayer Advocacy, Just Transition, Broadband, COVID-19, Civic Engagement, General Operating Support, and more. We are thankful for the support from the following organizations:

Sociological Initiatives Foundation
Alaska Department of Health and Social Services
Alaskans for Fair Redistricting
Tortuga Foundation
Alaska Conservation Foundation
Solidaire Network
Alaska Community Foundation's Coronavirus Non-profit Relief Fund
Alaska Community Foundation's Ruud-Mjos Fund
Movement Voter Project
Americans for Financial Reform Education Fund
Kataly Foundation
Native Movement & the Alaska Just Transition Community
Progress Alaska